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Memorandum

TO: The Honorable Pete Lund, Chair & Members
Michigan House Redistricting and Elections Committee

FROM: Felicia Wasson, Associate State Director for Government Affairs

DATE: January 24, 2012

RE: Opposition to House Bill 5061

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on House Bill 5061. AARP Michigan is opposed to this legislation because of its requirement for photo identification in order to obtain an absentee ballot.

AARP believes the right to vote, along with full and fair representation, is the most basic of political rights. We believe the imposition by government of further identification requirements for the exercise of this right are a hindrance and impediment for voters. Studies have shown that additional barriers to voting often have a disproportionate impact on minorities, the frail elderly and people with disabilities. User-friendly voting procedures, including more effective and less onerous registration processes, would encourage larger numbers of Americans to vote. House Bill 5061 does the opposite and would actually serve to discourage absentee voters from exercising that right in person.

We believe the voter identification requirement contained in House Bill 5061 will provide an impediment to the full participation of Michigan citizens - and in particular older citizens - in the electoral process. It is for these reasons that AARP Michigan is opposed to House Bill 5061.